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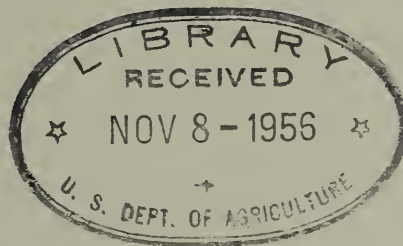
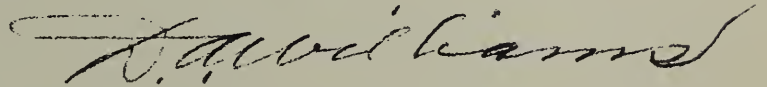
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Soil Conservation Service

Washington, D. C.
September 1, 1955

To: State and Territorial Conservationists
From: D. A. Williams, Administrator
Subject: MANAGEMENT IMPROVEMENT

Attached is a paper, "A Plan for Management Improvement in the Soil Conservation Service," which I think you will find stimulating and helpful. This paper was the Project Thesis prepared by Joseph B. Rogers as a part of his training in the Civil Service Senior Intern Program. Joe is our Area Conservationist at Bend, Oregon, and he was in Washington the first half of the calendar year as the Department of Agriculture representative in the Senior Intern Program.

Attachment



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"A Plan for Management Improvement
in the Soil Conservation Service"
Project Thesis
by Joseph B. Rogers
May 27, 1955

FOREWORD

The subject for this project thesis was selected during my first work assignment with the Personnel Division of the Soil Conservation Service. During this period I assisted in the preparation of the instructions for activating the Employees Incentive Awards Act, Public Law 763, in the agency.

As the work progressed it became more and more apparent to me that incentive for work performance involved much more than awards. I have therefore attempted to present a plan for management improvement in the Soil Conservation Service which recognizes the basic motivations for employee performance.

Incentive Awards have their proper place in this plan and are referred to in several places. I have therefore attached the following documents which were prepared during my work assignment and relate to the project thesis.

(Not attached
to this report)

1. SCS Administrator's Memorandum No. 80.
2. SCS Handbook on Incentive Awards.
3. Administrative Procedures Manual, Section
on "Incentive Awards."

A PLAN FOR MANAGEMENT IMPROVEMENT IN THE S.C.S.

"The Soil Conservation Service has, from its beginning, developed a record of achievement and efficiency of which we can be justly proud." "In the field, in the office and in the laboratory all of us have played a part in creating and shaping the working organization and dynamic program we have today." The above is a quotation from Administrator's Memorandum No. 80 announcing the new SCS Awards Program. It seems to me that Mr. Williams' statement is a tribute to SCS management improvement in general, however, and this is the subject I would like to discuss in this paper.

Juran has stated that management improvement must come from within. "It cannot be legislated by Congress and suggestions for change from outside provoke bitter resistance from the people inside." If we are to achieve success with a management improvement program it therefore follows that our first job is to instill management consciousness in all employees. Any employee should have the right to criticize, to suggest and otherwise to participate in the conduct of Government. The Soil Conservation Service is an important part of our national Government. It has a specific job to do; a job which is vital to the prosperity and life of our country. One of the responsibilities of administrators and supervisors is to provide an orderly channel to encourage and make use of employee participation in improving the methods we use to accomplish this job. As Mr. Williams states, "We have a record of achievement of which we can be justly proud." The record has been achieved, I fear, without too much orderliness in the use of employee participation. I hope to point out some methods whereby orderliness may be achieved and our management improvement record of the past thereby outdistanced in the future.

MANAGEMENT IMPROVEMENT IN GOVERNMENT

Each Chief Executive since 1900 has desired to reorganize and improve the Government, principally by giving the President additional staff assistance to do a better job of management. In 1937, the Brownlow Committee was appointed to study the problem. The President put many of the management improvement suggestions of this committee into effect by "Executive Order." The Brownlow Committee was followed by the Hoover Committees of 1949 and 1954. Each of these committees have made important recommendations for management improvement. These recommendations have all come from outside, however, and it is the purpose of this paper to discuss management improvement from within.

In 1912, the Ordinance Department of the War Department set up the first suggestion system to encourage management improvement. The Navy Department set up its system in 1918, but both systems were inactive between the two world wars. In 1942, the Washington Post conducted a campaign to encourage Government employees to submit ideas for improving work methods. The War Production Board encouraged private industry to set up employee suggestion systems. As a result of this activity the philosophy began to take hold in Government. The Navy reestablished suggestion systems in its arsenals. In 1943, the Bureau of the Budget reported as follows to a House Committee on appropriations: "Possibly one of the most

important projects at this time is the stimulation of department systems which will utilize all employee suggestions for improvement."

A factor which somewhat retarded the full development of Federal suggestion systems has been the fear that supervisor-employee relations will be weakened. Supervisors have participated all too little in personnel management, budgetary development and methods improvement.

After the last war, work improvement programs including awards continued in effect but were hampered by restrictions on approval and general apathy on the part of management. The 83rd Congress reworked the management improvement and awards program of the Federal Government. Public Law 763 now outlines in detail methods for encouraging management improvement.

INDIVIDUAL MOTIVATION

The greatest potentialities for improving administration lie in the area of the response of human beings to institutional situations. If we are to secure maximum employee contribution to management improvement we must recognize those things which motivate individuals. Dubin states that motivation is concerned with satisfactions. "These satisfactions include self-respect, recognition, economic return, pleasure and affection." Another important angle to motivation is social standard. "Everywhere among the workers a man determines the social standing of himself and his family not so much by the earning power as by the nature of his job. What every worker knows is this; that sooner or later the final joy of his work is settled not by him nor by his employer, but by the social standing awarded him by his fellow citizens. The best way to improve the job may be in fact to change what the outside public thinks about it and its doers."

Juran states that the desire for competition, for participation and for recognition are among the strongest human desires. "The problem is to harness human desires of human public servants toward the goal of effective management. Without some incentive, financial or otherwise, what is there in it for an employee, a supervisor or a line officer to meet his standard of performance."

William Oncken, Department of the Army, has stated that the old language of management consists of planning, organizing, directing, coordinating and controlling, but the new idea language of motivation consists of opportunity, recognition, belonging and security. "This new idea language all adds up to the ability of an employee to plan ahead with confidence with the boss, with his associates and with the organization."

From the above discussion, I believe we can set down the following generalizations to use in preparing our plan for management improvement:

1. Motivation of individuals is the key to job performance.
2. Working groups and individuals is the key to job performance.
3. Social standing, which affects self-respect, is high on the list of job motivations.
4. Financial rewards are low on the list of incentives, with participation, commendation, recognition, competition and social standing all coming first.

ROADS TO JOB IMPROVEMENT

There are five different roads to securing overall management improvement that may be used by administrators. These are: Use of commercial management engineers; use of organization and methods specialists or sections within the organization, use of "brainstorming" to get specific answers, the use of "directed suggestions," and the use of individual contributions. In actual practice, an organization should use any or all of these methods.

1. Management Engineers: In recent years many Government agencies have hired private management engineering companies to review their organizational set up and submit recommendations. The Soil Conservation Service has not to my knowledge used this method.
2. Organization and Methods Specialists: Many agencies have specialists spending full time on ways to improve the organization and the methods used. In some cases these sections become bottlenecks themselves by insisting on checking every step of procedure. The Soil Conservation Service has never used these specialists as such but has delegated the function to Assistant State Conservationists, Area Conservationists and to others in the line offices.
3. "Brainstorming": This is a relatively new procedure developed in industry and now being used in a few agencies of Government. In this method, a group of people get together and concentrate for an hour or so on one problem. Any idea no matter how good is put down. No one is allowed to criticize an idea submitted. After the session all of the ideas are analyzed. Usually several good ideas are found in the hundred or so submitted.
4. Directed Suggestions: This is similar to brainstorming in that supervisors ask for suggestions on specific problems. Employees are not brought together but merely asked to concentrate on the solution over a given period. One agency faced with a large cut requested the help of all its people in reducing costs to meet the cut. Over a six months' period 2,400 employees submitted 6,000 suggestions and of these 1800 or 27% were accepted and put into effect either by first line supervisors or their superiors.
5. Individual Contributions: In my estimation, the encouragement of spontaneous contributions from individual employees or groups of employees is the most important of the five "Roads to Job Improvement." The method is important from three angles: (1) Employee morale is raised; they get recognition, become part of the team. (2) The improvement comes from within and is therefore readily accepted. (3) Improvement ideas come from all directions; you get more of them at less cost. To work, the organization must be management conscious from top to bottom. One expert has said that Government employees produce only half as much as they are capable of. The field is therefore wide open. We will get more ploughing done if everybody works at it than if only a specialized team or two is in harness.

ROADS TO USE IN A STATE OR TERRITORY

It is suggested that States and Territories confine their program emphasis to individual contributions, directed suggestions and "brainstorming" in the order named. These three methods can be used with present facilities and personnel. They come within the scope of authority now held by states and territories and they should if properly handled produce maximum results.

1. Individual Contributions: Every employee is now making a contribution to the overall program of the Soil Conservation Service. That contribution is vital to the program or he would not be on the job. Work improvement therefore begins with each and every job we are doing. Each employee should ask himself these questions:

- a. Am I performing my job in accordance with my ability?
- b. Can I accomplish more in the time I have available?
- c. Am I concentrating on the important things or do minor activities consume my time?
- d. Can I reschedule my time to accomplish more?
- e. Can I eliminate some unessentials I am now doing?
- f. Can I take a short cut or perfect a better method for what I am doing?
- g. Am I getting personal satisfactions out of my job?

Employee contributions are of three types:

- a. Idea or invention type in which the employee suggests improvements in operations.
- b. Sustained superior work performance. Every employee has it within himself to make this type of contribution.
- c. Special acts or services. Every employee has opportunities for giving of himself at least in a small way.

It is suggested that State or Territorial Offices rely chiefly on individual contributions to achieve management improvement. Equal or greater emphasis should be placed on performance type contributions than on suggestions. Suggestions may be more spectacular but it is everyday performance that gets the job done.

2. Directed Suggestions: I would like to propose that each State and Territorial Conservationist select at least one State or Territorial-wide problem each year and ask all employees to concentrate on ideas for solving that particular problem. The problem need not be complicated but it should be one with which something can and will be done. How to reduce long distance telephone call costs, how to most efficiently use the limited number of engineers available, how to get by this year with the cars and pick-ups on hand, how to schedule State office personnel time, etc.; these are a few examples. The request should give a reasonable period of time for reply. In some cases it could be a continuing process all year long. In others where action must be taken a deadline will be necessary.

I would like to emphasize that this method should not be used unless some of the suggestions received can and will be accepted. At the end of the period the State or Territorial Conservationist should do the following:

- a. Announce the total number of suggestions received.
- b. Announce the number approved and put in use.
- c. If possible, announce results of the suggestions received and used; that is, time or money saved, increased output, etc.
- d. He must be able to say that, "With your assistance we have met this problem in this manner."
- e. In this particular method it is not necessary to give names of individuals submitting suggestions even though theirs is the one adopted. Each should be thanked for sending in his suggestion; but everyone should get credit for the results. Working together as a team on this particular problem we were able to accomplish this.

The idea of this procedure is not so much to find solutions to a problem, although that may be important, as to get across to all employees that they are a part of the organization and their help is needed.

3. Brainstorm Sessions: As the third road to management improvement in a State or Territory, I would like to propose at least one "Brainstorming" session in each area each year. This session should be held at a regular area staff meeting. Either all of the area staff or the portion involved with the question should participate. A few simple rules should be followed.
 - a. Select a simple question -- not an umbrella type question that might lead off into tangents. Examples might be, "How to acquaint the Public with the work of the Soil Conservation Service?" or "How to assist Soil Conservation District Supervisors assume their role of leadership?"
 - b. If possible, hold the session after eating together at a luncheon or dinner. Don't talk about the business until after eating.
 - c. Let the Area Conservationist or State Conservationist if it involves State-wide policy, answer questions for a few minutes about the problem. Then send him out.
 - d. Read the following rules to the group:
 - (1) Any judicial comment or criticism is out of order.
 - (2) Free wheeling is welcome -- ideas are wanted no matter how wild.
 - (3) Quantities of ideas are wanted -- the more the better.
 - (4) Combinations are welcome as you go along. One idea leads to another or may add to or ~~hitch~~-hike on another.
 - (5) A stenographer takes down all ideas -- not verbatim, but in general. Do not attach names with the idea.
 - (6) At the close thank everybody and invite them to send in additional ideas which may occur to them in the next few days.
 - e. After the session screen the results. Out of a hundred suggestions, ten or a dozen may be good leads for improving the program.
 - f. Inform the group of results obtained and action to be taken. Credit goes to the whole group. No one actually knows who made the approved suggestion. The action taken may be the result of several combinations.

PROVIDING MOTIVATION

Early in this paper we talked about the importance of different incentives or motivations to work performance. One of the basic precepts to management improvement should be to work through those things which provide the most incentive. I will therefore discuss some of these in their approximate order of importance.

1. Participation - We have said before that orderly channels should be provided to encourage as well as make use of employee participation. These channels should be in addition to participation in the form of everyday work performance. I would like to suggest three channels for this purpose. Two have already been described in some detail; directed suggestions and brainstorm sessions. The third comes under the category of individual contribution in the form of work improvement proposals. In the first two methods administrators take the initiative for securing participation, whereas in the third the initiative is with the individual himself. The SCS Awards Program encourages participation in this manner. The extent to which the individual fulfills his natural desire for participation will be determined to a large degree by the extent to which his participation and that of his fellow workers is handled. The awards program has therefore wisely provided:
 - a. That all suggestions will be acknowledged as soon as received.
 - b. That they will be given a fair and impartial review within 30 days.
 - c. That all rejected ideas will be handled in such a manner that the employee will know his effort was appreciated and additional ideas will be welcome.

If the individual is to obtain satisfaction from participation he must be made to feel that his participation is appreciated even though the contribution itself was of little value.

2. Competition: One of the stronger human desires is competition. Without it there would be little zest for work. A good management improvement program will therefore provide for competition. This may be done by providing recognition to the individuals and units submitting the most suggestions, for the most approved suggestions, for suggestions saving the most money, etc. Reports of work accomplishment may also be used for this purpose. The reports must, however, be accurate and above question if such competition is to provide satisfaction.
3. Recognition: The new incentive awards program of the Government has been designed to provide satisfaction by recognition not only to employees actively participating in management improvement but also to those doing a better than average job or performing a special act or service.

In the Soil Conservation Service we now have four types of awards which provide recognition.

- a. Honor Awards including Distinguished Service Awards, Superior Service Awards and the Soil Conservation Service Citation.
- b. Length-of-Service Awards.
- c. Safety Awards.
- d. Cash Awards.

The Administrative Procedures Manual describes these awards, how they are

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initiated, reviewed and approved. State and Territorial Offices should use these procedures for supplying the satisfaction of recognition to individuals and groups.

4. Commendation: Commendation is one of the little things that bring big satisfactions. It is something that everyone can give and everyone should receive. It takes very little effort, but yields great returns. The Administrative Procedures Manual points out that all supervisors have the authority and responsibility to recognize good work. Here is a part of the plan for management improvement that yields two of the deeper satisfactions; that of participation (commending) and that of receiving a pat on the back for work well done.
5. Social Status: Social status affects self-respect, and without self-respect individuals cannot be happy in the work they are doing. Soil and water conservation has always been a high calling. There is no question about the importance of the job. In recent years, however, there has been some question as to who should handle the work. There has been criticism, in some states more than others, of duplication of effort. These things all affect social status in the minds of employees. They wonder what people are thinking of them and their job. Are the things printed in newspapers true? This aspect of motivation is the most difficult to strengthen. Public acceptance of a government program cannot be changed in a day. The Soil Conservation Service, however, has been a popular agency. It has done a tremendous job for the people of America. State and Territorial offices should impress employees with the importance of the job they are doing today, the accomplishments of the past and the task ahead. This is a continuing job. Every training session every staff meeting and every job review should include something along this line.

The public too, must get the facts. A good information program in every field unit will do much to raise the social prestige of the individual and of the Service. The employee, himself, must be made to feel the importance of the job he is doing. Pride of workmanship will stimulate a desire for improvement. This desire to improve directed into orderly channels for Service-wide use becomes the management improvement program of the Soil Conservation Service.

6. Monetary Rewards: Although listed last in order of motivation importance, monetary rewards are nevertheless important. The new incentive awards plan provides for Cash Awards. It is no longer necessary to invent a gadget to qualify. Cash may be paid for above average work performance or for special acts or services as well as for approved suggestions. An important aspect of the plan is that cash may be paid in addition to recognition with honor awards. Thus, the satisfaction of recognition is backed up with the satisfaction of monetary gain. State and Territorial Conservationists will want to administer this portion of the plan with care. They must approve enough cash awards to make the program count in the eyes of employees and yet restrict them to deserving cases to uphold the incentive value. Nevertheless, it becomes an important tool in management improvement and one that can now be used close enough to the field to really count.

7. Sanctions or Penalties: There may be some question about the use of sanctions or penalties in a management improvement program. It may be, however, that positive forms of motivation are not enough for all individuals. If they were the millenium would have arrived. The motivation of fear probably has a necessary and proper place. Fear for loss of job, loss of prestige, loss of promotion, etc., is a real thing to many people. It can be a detriment to efficient work as well as a stimulant. In most cases fear should be replaced or eased by the proper use of the first six motivations. In a relatively few cases, however, it will need to be planted by the supervisor to secure satisfactory response.

SUGGESTED PLAN OF ACTION

I have pointed out that management improvement involves individuals and that individuals are motivated by satisfactions they receive from their work. If we are to improve employee performance, all supervisors should understand these motivations and use them in their leadership role.

We can all be proud of the SCS training program in technical fields. The Service has concentrated on engineering, farm planning, soil surveys and all of the day-to-day jobs our people do. It should provide more training in the fields of supervision, of leadership development and of human relations. Employees are selected for supervisory jobs primarily on the basis of their success in a technical job. This is understandable as the majority of our supervisory jobs are supervisory only in part. The average supervisor may spend 15% of his time on supervision and the other 85% on other types of work. His success as a supervisor, however, directly affects his success in the other field.

The above summarization is not a reflection on SCS alone. The situation is present in all branches of the Government and in most industrial organizations. We should therefore openly recognize it and attempt to balance our training program. The following suggestions are presented for consideration:

Plan for the National Office:

1. Develop a national policy statement on supervisor training and leadership development. It should include two directives (a) to provide training for all individuals as they assume supervisory roles from now on and (b) to provide opportunity for training those now in supervisory positions.
2. Secure concurrence of State and Territorial Conservationists. Build up an attitude of management consciousness from the top down.
3. Provide for special sessions on supervision at the training centers or at other locations especially suited to this function. The sessions should be designed for the major supervisory jobs; work unit conservationist, area conservationist and State Conservationist and should be held as often as necessary to handle personnel newly appointed to these jobs.
4. Set up a program for training promising individuals for positions of executive leadership. Follow the procedure of the Civil Service Intern Program, but with emphasis on administration in SCS.

5. Hold a biennial conference for all supervisors, area conservationists and above, primarily as a refresher course in leadership. These should be held on a regional basis and follow somewhat the old Region 7 administrative conferences but concentrate on what's new in supervision.
6. Provide simple, periodic reports of major SCS accomplishments for in-Service use (the Administrator's letter has been very good).

Plan for the State and Territorial Offices:

1. Endorse the national policy statement on supervisor training and leadership development.
2. Give more weight to personality traits indicating leadership ability when selecting employees for supervisory jobs.
3. Send newly appointed work unit conservationists to training center sessions designed for them.
4. Send newly appointed area conservationists to training center sessions designed for them.
5. Nominate promising individuals for the national executive leadership training school.
6. Hold a biennial training session for all supervisors below area conservationist as a refresher course in supervision.
7. Provide an opportunity for job methods training for all employees.
8. Distribute a short, simple bulletin on state-wide accomplishments at periodic intervals.

Plan for All Supervisors:

1. List supervisory responsibilities. Many supervisors have only a vague idea of who they supervise and what they are responsible for.
2. Study each subordinate. Determine as near as possible which types of motivations provide the satisfactions he needs. Use these motivations to secure job improvement.
3. Encourage participation by subordinates in decision making when they or their work are involved.
4. Be quick to praise, slow to chastise.
5. Demonstrate pride in the job, pride in the Service and pride in the people who work for the Service.

6. Review incentive award possibilities for subordinates at least every six months.
7. Encourage the use of the SCS suggestion system and use good ideas received.
8. Openly recognize the importance of each job performed by subordinates.
9. Keep subordinates informed of all accomplishments.

SUMMARY

I have attempted to point out that management improvement should come from within an organization and have suggested several ways to motivate employees to contribute. These include the following:

1. Encourage employee participation by use of brainstorm sessions, directed suggestions and the new SCS suggestion system.
2. Provide recognition by use of awards as outlined in the Soil Conservation Service Awards Program.
3. Provide competition by proper publicity of suggestions, awards and work accomplishments.
4. Use commendations to encourage workers whenever they deserve praise whether or not they receive awards.
5. Improve the social status of employees in their own eyes and in the eyes of the public.
6. Use monetary awards in accordance with the SCS Awards Plan.
7. Use sanctions or penalties sparingly and only after the above have failed.

A plan for promoting the use of these management improvement methods and for maintaining that use in the agency is proposed. The plan suggests an overall policy statement of the objectives of management improvement, training for all supervisors as they assume supervisory responsibilities and periodic refresher sessions to maintain management awareness.

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